

The restrictions currently being imposed on general aviation pilots and aircraft owners in the Washington DC area are a travesty and are emblematic of the reactionary and misdirected response to the events of last September, namely to take superficial action against a perceived, but realistically non-existent threat, in order to mollify a misinformed public. General aviation does not now, nor has it ever posed a threat to public safety and nation security. It is rather, an integral part of the economy and a vital symbol of the freedoms we are guaranteed as Americans. The vast overreaching of the justifications offered in defense of the current rules can be very dramatically demonstrated by the recent deliberate crash of a general aviation plane into an office building in Tampa. Even a pilot determined to use such a plane as a weapon, and exceedingly rare and abhorrent occurrence, succeeded in doing no more than killing himself, ruining a perfectly good airplane, breaking some glass and knocking over a desk or two. Indeed, when a similarly deranged individual attempted to do the same thing at the White House, he merely bounced off the outer wall and into the shrubbery. Meanwhile, large commercial airliners are plying the skies (as well they should) and large trucks and vans roam the streets of our nations capitol virtually unrestricted. General aviation was target for such restrictions simply because it is an easy scapegoat for a public that, as mentioned above, is sorely misinformed. It is in essence a soft target for the government's public relations machine. Going after soft targets is the hallmark of small thinkers and terrorists alike. As an attorney and federal worker I find such an approach to regulation shameful. As an American, I find it frightening.

As a pilot based at College Park Airport (CGS), I feel obligated to point out its unique and historic position, and its tremendous value to the area and the nation as a whole. CGS has operated as an airport since not long after the dawn of aviation itself. Founded by the Wright brothers to train US Army pilots, it is as great a national treasure as any monument or national park. When one considers the reasons that the 20th century is often referred to as "The American Century", one almost has to start with aviation. Were it not for the achievements of the Wrights, the Curtis', the Lindberghs, the airmen of World War II, and all the rest, America would hardly be what it is today. Well, CGS is a major part of that history, and I hope, the future. To allow unjustified and irrational governmental regulation to shut it down would be tantamount to razing Yellowstone to stop a few picnic basket poaching bears.

Other commenters in this proceeding have addressed the practical flaws in the current procedures, so I will merely say that I echo their concerns. I have worked within the current system since day one, not because I thought it reasonable, but because I had no choice. The procedures are an added, unnecessary burden on already over worked air traffic controllers, briefers, and pilots. Many of the pilots using the subject airports are not instrument rated and are unaccustomed to such procedures, a factor which leads many not to use the airports at all. Even for those who are, the concern about extreme consequences for minor mistakes is daunting. By closing the airspace to all but a few pilots, the restrictions have made the airports unviable economically and threatens their continued existence.

The general aviation community has shown a great willingness to work towards a solution that will ensure safety and security to the greatest practicable extent. I only hope that the DOT, FAA, TSA, Secret Service, and any other relevant authority and be equally as reasonable.